DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 103 548 UD 014 922

AUTHOR	Crain, Robert L.
TITLE	Summary of Reviewers Comments [of the Rand Corporations Design for a Longitudinal Study of School Desegregation.]
INSTITUTION	Rand Corp., Santa Monica, Calif.
PUB DATE	Nov 74
NOTE	13p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	Educational Research; *Longitudinal Studies; Program Development; Program Planning; Program Proposals; Racial Integration; *Research Design; *Research Methodology; Research Needs; *Research Problems; Research Projects; Research Proposals; *School Integration; Social Sciences
IDENTIFIERS	Commission Civil Rights

ABSTRACT

Four groups of people were requested to review the Rand Corporation's design for a longitudinal study of school desegregation. When the study design documents were sent to the reviewers, an evaluation questionnaire was attached. The reviewers were asked to add any needed clarifying comments in the spaces provided after each question, and to write up to six pages (single spaced typing) of additonal comments. The most important points are listed in this document for each reviewer, and an attempt is made to indicate whether the reviewer's overall view is positive or negative. Many of the reviewers criticized various aspects of the proposed instruments. The narrative comments provided by the reviewers suggest a wide spectrum of opinion about the Rand study design. Despite the fact that there are areas of clear disagreement, there are also areas of clear agreement. There is disagreement about whether the Commission should try to implement a study based on the Rand design. There seems to be fairly strong agreement that the Rand study, and perhaps any feasible study, will not produce many unambiguous answers to important policy questions, but a majority of the reviewers also felt that such a study could provide more reliable answers than are presently available to some of those questions. (JM)

ED103548

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SUMMARY OF REVIEWERS COMMENTS

prepared by
Robert Crain

The Rand Corporation
November 1974

Following are brief summaries of the important points made by each reviewer. The four types of reviewers (Civil Rights Commission staff, Civil Rights Activists, Government agency staff and professional researchers) are grouped separately, but there is no order within each category. The most important points are listed for each reviewer, and an attempt is made to indicate whether the reviewer's overall view is positive or negative. Many of the reviewers criticized various aspects of the proposed instruments; to avoid unnecessary duplication that criticism is noted here rather than below.

Lee Cronbach

Cronbach is very critical of the report. He specifically focuses on two major criticisms; first, the use of a matched quartets design, which he believes is wrong and should be replaced by more conventional random samples; secondly, he is opposed to the experimental design for studying the impact of innovations. His argument is that it is impossible to put innovations in place without them being drastically altered by their environment; innovations run in an experimental setting are different from innovations run in the real world. He also is pessimistic about the whole innovations strategy that has been used in the last ten years in educational research.

He dislikes the one-year longitudinal survey on the grounds that student gains over that year would be too small to measure accurately.

Cronbach is not interested in some of the non-cognitive effects: "the extra-curricular question is just plain unworthy of discussion.... if there is an effect it is probably on student morale. I don't find in this study a serious attempt to find out if the programs are accompanied by good educational results. And without that evidence no policymaker should listen."

Cronbach's most favorable views are toward the case study approach, both in the politics of desegregation and in observing schools as they go through the first few years of desegregation. He is concerned about weaknesses in the methodology: "The closest attention to the issues of quasi experimentation, bias in analysis of covariance and effects of nonrepresentative sampling should be given before any move is made toward structured studies."

UD 014922

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Tom Pettigrew

Pettigrew is very favorable to the project and particularly praises the general strategy of the data bank plus ancillary studies. He would modify the study to place the entire emphasis upon prospects for improving desegregated schools. He writes:

> There should be no simple input-output aggregate effect study of desegregation vs. segregation on achievement (or other variables) without the mediation of process variables (many of which under this proposal would not be fully studied until late in the six year cycle).
>
> There should be no one-year longitudinal reporting of results in order to answer (inadequately) some felt need for "early" policy relevant.... results.
>
> The price tag may seem large but I think it is relatively cheap if you compare it to the amount of money that the Federal government has already spent on research in this area in the past decade.

Elsewhere he adds:

> Section IV--while it may seem jargon laden in spots, is one of the best 75 page summaries I have ever seen on the subject....

Jane Mercer

Briefly, Mercer takes the view that survey research approaches are futile. She argues that the differences between schools are too small to be analyzed and that politically one runs the risk of further research which says that nothing can be done to help minorities.

She also argues against the comparative case studies of the politics of desegregation on the grounds that, as designed, the study has no theoretical perspective. She generally favors cutting the whole project down in scope in order to make it administratively manageable. She argues strongly for the experimental version of the innovation study and wants to cut everything else down to focus on the study.

Ralph Tyler

Tyler is generally favorable to the project, but has a couple of sharp reservations. His most important is that the use of standard achievement tests is a serious mistake. He presents a two or three page well-reasoned essay calling for the use of criterion-referenced tests.

Briefly he argues that national standardized tests really measure only innate ability, even if they are called achievement tests; he states that a true achievement test must test the child on what his school has tried to teach him. He also argues that many teachers do not know how to teach low income students or black students. We must add to the study more concern with the academic content of the teacher's behavior.

He criticizes the experimental school innovations design on the grounds that it is impossible to get control over the teacher's behavior and the experiment would thus be invalid. I think this is very close to Cronbach's position.

Barak Rosenshine

Rosenshine's comments parallel some of Mercer's. He feels that surveys have accomplished little. He also thinks that the effects of desegregation on achievement will be small because he believes school effects are generally small, and that this is a reason not to embark on this project. "Do you want another study that concludes that the schools don't make a difference?" He is also very critical of the proposed classroom observation measures and the analysis of what happens in classrooms generally. He endorses the idea of experimental studies, but seems to find nothing of value in the Rand project.

Morton Deutsch

Deutsch's evaluation is extremely favorable. He likes the overall study and especially likes the experimental version. He is pessimistic about school districts cooperating and recommends a feasibility study to determine this before going further. He recommends that considerable work be done in determining the policy questions which policymakers have about desegregation. He writes, "I would recommend (funding the experimental design option), but I would suggest that complete funding be delayed until after a feasibility study.... (this) would entail 'experience surveys' of selected categories of people--critically relevant to the policy process--to identify the issues for which they are seeking additional knowledge and information. It would then require selection of several key issues and formulation of experimental designs that are appropriate to providing answers to these key questions." He closes his letter by writing, "let me state again my very favorable reaction to the quality of the proposal. We are in a state of ignorance about many issues that the proposal is addressed to. These issues are of fundamental importance to the well being of our society and they warrant repeated large-scale efforts to develop the knowledge that is needed. The amount of money being requested is relatively small compared to the research and development expenditures accompanying many minor forms of technological change."

M. Brewster Smith

Brewster Smith's overall view of the proposal is extremely favorable. He is, however, concerned about the serious difficulty of research management of a project of this scale. Nevertheless, he believes that this is the kind of effort that should be made. He writes, "I wholeheartedly endorse its ambition in regard to the appropriate scale of the endeavor. When I was Chairman of the Social Science Advisory Committee to NSF, we bemoaned the piddling scale of so much social and behavioral research. Not that social sciences are ready to deliver a 'manhattan project' to solve social problems--far from it. But serious

work on serious problems does require a scale of investment beyond that to which we are accustomed. ...I have been a skeptic about the value of much of the federal investment in educational research. This seems to me a fine chance to show that concentrated investment of funds can produce information of substantial social value. Not only will it provide policy guidance and public stimulus in regard to the (lagging) process of desegregation; it should advance policy-relevant educational research across the board."

Alexander Astin

Astin is concerned that the relationship between policy and research is ambiguous, and ends his first paragraph by saying, "despite the sensitivities involved in this issue, I should think that the Commission could be more explicit and avoid the use of euphemistic and ambiguous terminology in stating the aims of the project."

Astin favors the experimental variant. He argues that since the experiment is designed to test the merits of feasible programs, then these innovations, if they are feasible, can be randomly executed. Finally, he argues for more use of observational data, and a greater emphasis upon peer group relations. His summary reads as follows:

1. Much greater use of direct observational behavior at the school level (pre and post).

2. Extension of the study into post secondary education, with consideration given to the utilization of existing longitudinal data to assess impact of desegregation during the 1960's and early 1970's.

3. Revise current instruments to place a greater emphasis on vocational and career aspirations and, particularly in the older groups, to assess impact on peer group interaction.

Astin's perspective (from the viewpoint of one who has done research in the colleges) is interesting. First, it is a generally more optimistic view of whether the research can be done, reflecting our greater success with college research. Secondly, drawing on his own research program, he recommends that devices be built in to feed findings back to school people.

J. Stanley Ahmann

Ahmann is Director of the National Assessment. Ahmann's main points are that more work needs to be done identifying issues of interest to policy makers, and the heavy reliance on instruments which have been used only a few times in the past means that extensive pretesting is necessary. As he puts it, "under no circumstances should any substantive parts of the study be started without convincing evidence that the data gathering instrument proposed is suitably sensitive to measure small differences displayed by the various (groups) under study." His view

of the experimental design option is that it is only as good as the quality of the innovations being developed. Finally, he supports the idea of measuring a wider range of cognitive skills. He thinks we should go past basic skills to get at such a wide range. Two of his recommendations are:

1. Establish a panel of so-called policymakers interested in this area immediately. Probe them intensively to discover the major policy questions which they wish to have answered. On the basis of these, a re-examination of the plan should be made in order to determine whether there is reasonable compability between the interests of the policy makers and the potential outcomes of the various studies.

2. An advisory committee of policy makers and representatives of funding agencies should be functioning at the beginning of the study and should examine with care the coordination of various parts, giving particular attention to such sensitive areas as the study of innovative schools. Such committees should be highly instrumental in the process of encouraging and assisting the funding of additional research not now formally a part of the research plan.

He closes by saying, "In order that there be no confusion in this matter let it be said forthrightly that the research design has an immense amount of potential and should be pursued vigorously."

Robert K. Merton

Merton's main point is that we should be pessimistic about the policy utility of research. We should not assume that the reason why previous research has not been policy useful is because the research was not done well. He writes that the Commission must recognize that any research will have limited policy utility, it will be "taken into account and turned to account" by the whole collection of different groups involved.

He wants the project restructured so that all of the analysts get a chance to participate in designing the instruments. This is to avoid the problem of the secondary analysis contracts not being intellectually attractive to people. Merton is disturbed by the use of the word "Anglo-American."

Marshall ("Mike") Smith

Mike Smith doesn't like the report's discussion of what happens in schools nor the recommendations for research on what happens inside schools. He writes "another modified 'planned variation' design is fine in principle but a disaster in practice until we know something more about how children learn in schools." In our November 1973 meeting he argued for funding basic theoretical research on educational process, and seems to still hold to that position. His summary:

1. Your costs will be much greater than Rand estimates if you carry out the whole study.

2. I would concentrate on trying to figure out ways to make desegregation peaceful--on the socio-political determinants of smooth desegregation rather than on the classroom practice analyses. (This is only in the context of the Rand report, for I feel they are rather strong on the former and weak on the latter.)

3. Figure out precisely which policy questions you wish to answer from the Federal level, for the State level and for the local level. Generally, I suspect those questions need only descriptive studies to provide answers--not studies designed to answer causal connections.

Robert L. York

After a brief sentence of kind words about the Rand design, York focuses on two points. First, he would modify our design which involves selecting "promising programs" to study over a period of time. York's alternative is to select a group of exceptionally effective schools, and study them, but he also notes there have been difficulties with this latter approach.

His letter discusses in detail ideas for management structure of the project which are too complex to summarize briefly.

Trudi Lucas (NSF-RANN)

Trudi Lucas focuses on a single issue--measuring the real differences between minority and majority schools. She makes two main recommendations:

1. Get program cost and total expenditure data.

   A. Budget decisions are important policy instruments. No decision-maker is likely to act on recommendations for program changes to make integration work without knowing a) how much costs will average; b) the threshold of investment required to make the programs meaningful.

   B. The equity of expenditure issues across minority and majority schools is not a dead issue. Also differences in the price of buying and maintaining the same quality of physical resources haven't been, to my knowledge, estimated. Urban-rural and regional differences in total expenditures are real and connected with differences in educational outputs and distributions of majority and minority peoples.

2. Measure school quality directly .

   A. Indicators of the presence or absence of facilities and programs do not adequately reflect differences in quantity, quality, age or even cost of equipment.

   B. Teacher quality varies after controls for educational credentials.

   C. Financial mis-management seems to be a real issue in evaluating education for minority students.

Lucas concludes by saying, "Of all the impressions left by Coleman and his followers, the most damaging and unsubstantiated is that notion that there is no explanation for minority failure to be constructed from differences in the provision of high quality educational resources."

Ray Rist

Rist has recently joined NIE and is responsible for research on integration. He raises 8 points in his letter. (1) He argues that the distinction between desegregation and segregation should be defined in terms of the local cultural context rather than as a simple statistical distinction. (2) He argues that we have understated the political process variables, and do not have strong historical data on the political process in each district. (3) He argues that the project does not have a clear sense of what a 'process' study is and therefore has failed to construct one. (4) He argues that we have ignored important literature. (5) He believes that the safeguards on confidentiality of material are weak. (6) He observes that without mandatory cooperation, response rates will probably be low. (7) He believes that the survey instruments focused too heavily upon the anti-integration attitudes of white parents and white elites and not enough on the aspirations, values or beliefs of the minority communities. (8) He argues that the project is more directed toward describing how well desegregation is working now, but is not a good design to determine how desegregation could be made to work better.

Mark Lohman

Lohman is with NIE, and is an alumnus of the Stanford R & D Center. Lohman's argument is complex and difficult to summarize, but I will take the risk of misrepresenting his position and attempt to do so anyway. He argues that there is an alternative approach to the Rand project which is much more likely to succeed, if the goal is to find ways of eliminating the road blocks to desegregation. The survey method, he argues, is best suited to describing the mass of detail present in the real world and is well suited to answering the wide variety of questions that many people have about desegregation. However, if the goal is to make desegregation a reality, he argues that the use of small-scale radical interventions focused on eliminating particular types of problems is a more promising strategy.

Thus, for example, one would design and fund several interventions designed to close achievement gaps between ethnic groups. These interventions would be so radical that they would not be acceptable to a random selection of school districts and would have to be applied only to schools which volunteered to participate.

Bernard C. Watson

Watson is Chairman of the Department of Urban Education at Temple. Watson's comments are brief and generally favorable. He expresses some opposition about the experimental design but devotes most of his concern to two problems; the difficulties of monitoring the study, and the work proposed by Rand on Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans. He summarizes himself as follows:

> I would strongly recommend that the Civil Right Commission monitor the study and make major alterations in its design if too many schools or districts drop out of the study at any point during the three to five year period. Rand has done a good review and analysis of the literature and research impinging upon the issues.
>
> I would strongly recommend that the staffing of the research team include blacks and Spanish-speaking people, both Puerto Rican and Mexican-American. Unlike Rand's recommendation, I would strongly urge that written questionnaires be prepared in Spanish as well as English.
>
> I seriously question some of the assumptions and conclusions Rand made about the attitudes and beliefs of Spanish-speaking people.

Gordon Foster

Foster is Director of the Desegregation General Assistance Center at the University of Miami, generally regarded as the most effective in the nation. Foster is highly critical of the project both in terms of specific details of the design but also in terms of the general strategy. His two most significant criticisms (to me) are the proposal to use a large number of questionnaire items which have not been previously validated, and the failure of the project to develop a definition of a segregated or desegregated school in "the context of the school district of which it is a component part."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

He generally argues for a smaller and tighter study with less room for pedantic arguments about the results and more closely tied to specific policy objectives. However, he notes that research has had little impact on policymakers up to now and is pessimistic that further research will make much difference.

He also writes:

> "Initiate a needs assessment from potential research consumers. There is little point in spending all this money unless there are a substantial number of serious consumers who have a problem."
>
> "Develop a smaller but tighter survey design which will make a complete analysis of the segregation-desegregation-integration process and have it all ready to function. Then identify ten to twenty systems of different size, location, and demographic make-up where it is more likely to happen in the next year. Turn on the faucet e.g., Dayton, Ohio; Wilmington, Deleware."

Jean Fairfax

Jean Fairfax is Director of the Division of Legal Information and Community Service for the Legal Defense Fund. She feels that the study is a competent design built on a fundamental wrong assuption and should be reworded from scratch. She wishes the project to view desegregation with a "legal, but not a sociological" definition. By that she means that the study of bi-racial schools in districts which are not desegregated is confusing and misleading. Rather, the study should be restructured to focus explicitly upon legally desegregated districts or districts in the process of reaching a state of desegregation which would be acceptable to the courts. She argues that the restriction of the study to those cases would accomplish two things -- it would focus the study upon district-level decisions, which is what desegregation means as a legal process, and in this revised design the emphasis should be upon experimental studies to test out innovative projects to enhance desegregation.

Carol H. Smith

Carol Smith is now with the Bureau of Post-Secondary Education in O.E., and is one of the co-authors of Equality of Educational Opportunity. She is generally opposed to the approach of the study. I think it is fair to say that she views a value-free survey research study as missing the point. Thus she would agree with Lohman's comments. She writes "my overall reaction to the focus of the design is negative. I find it difficult to reconcile the Commission on Civil Rights spending the bulk of 9-14 million for a series of studies to ascertain if the law of the land (i.e., desegregation) is working, rather than expend this amount on studies which would show it could be made to work. Pure research in this area without some value judgment will be of very little help

in steering the nation toward law, order and justice.

She goes on to point to two or three topics which are inadequately developed in the design.-- the problem of excessive and unjustified suspension and explusion of minority group students, violence against minorities by the majority groups, and the firing of minority staff. She writes "Such obvious omissions put the onus of desegregation's failure heavily on the shoulders of the minority group."

Mabel M. Smythe

Dr. Smythe is Vice President for Research and Publication of the Phelps Stokes Fund. Smythe views the survey method as inappropriate to the task and reflecting a point of view of establishmentarian white liberals. She recommends that the study be cut down, more sharply focused and use case study methods to focus on the important issues. She recommends dropping the concern with cognitive achievement or sharply reducing it: She writes:

> "Focus with imagination and commitment on the noncognitive benefits of successfully desegregated schools, defining those benefits with care and precision."
>
> "Do careful case studies of several schools, identifying the issues, procedure, community pressures, etc., as well as outcomes in terms of the objectives of the study (Boston, Denver, Brunswick, Ga., and Miami might be candidates)."

Joe R. Feagin

In Feagin's view the proposal suffers in two areas. It does not clearly define desegregation, and it does not focus on classroom interaction. He would recommend changing the proposal to distinguish more clearly the different ways in which bi-racial schools might come about, focusing more attention on district-level complete desegregation. In general he also favors an increase in the number of classroom settings to be studied in detail, adding classrooms which are not innovative. He raises several other problems. Not enough attention has been paid to response rate, and the hypotheses in the proposal are not explicit enough. He believes the experimental design to be politically unfeasible.

He writes:

> Give more thought and attention to the political consequences of social science research of this type. E.g., publicity is more likely to be given to negative results showing no gains for black children (if that should turn out to be a finding) in certain types of desegregated schools. What are the implications for this for the CRC? The proposal in general suffers from a lack of concern with the institutional context within the research will be conducted (indeed, students receive more attention than power-holding white adults; is this another "victimology" study)?

James Lyons

Jim Lyons believes that the Rand proposal's critical shortcomings should preclude its implementation, and goes further to argue that a survey-research approach is a mistaken one. He sees two major omissions in the design: there is insufficient attention paid to the role of racial composition of educational personnel and the related problems of the demotion and dismissal of minority teachers and administrators. He concludes by recommending that we "abandon the present study design: desist from all efforts to do survey research in the area of school desegregation; proceed cautiously with well-designed, comprehensive case studies and possibly a few highly structured and controlled experimental studies."

Gene Mornell

Mornell cites a number of specific weaknesses in the report -- that it is not sufficiently policy directed, that it is unclear on what types of desegregation it is studying. However, these specific criticisms are eclipsed by his more general conclusion that the design makes a fundamental mistake in trying to be all things to all men. He concludes by recommending that this project be abandoned and that we instead "focus on one or two limited studies (I would suggest community study and innovative schools) and more carefully design them." He states his argument as follows: "The result of Rand's approach is a proposal that touches upon 'everything' in the field of school desegregation with little effort to state biases clearly, define precise objectives, and develop specific hypotheses or models. ...However, this attempt to be 'objective' is often contradicted by the value-laden statements which appear throughout the paper leaving the impression that the design is a political document intended to appeal to the many points of view of desegregation and the many interests of research scientists and funding agencies.

"This approach is justified by the stated assumption that there is little agreement as to which policy issues are more important -- an assumption which is clearly false, especially so far as the Commission is concerned. It is also based on the stated assumption that no single study could succeed in settling the outstanding policy issues -- an assumption which is clearly true if the first assumption determines the design. However, even given these assuptions and this design, there is no way to predict if the study will lead to policy relevant conclusions, and indeed it seems likely that it will not lead to such conclusions. A greater possibility is that the study will lead to a host of inconclusive, contradictory and insignificant findings, many of which may be used to attack desegregation."

Gregg Jackson

Gregg Jackson's highly detailed comments can be very briefly summarized as follows. On the one hand, he finds a number of correctable inadequacies in the design. He would recommend using a different type of achievement test, adding Spanish translations to instruments, reconceptualizing or rewording a number of questionnaire items, recalculating sample types and sizes and enlarging them where needed, and adding additional instructions on instrument administration. However, he writes "if the above inadequacies are corrected this study, and any other design, will still be seriously limited in making firm inferences about most of the policy relevant aspects of school desegregation. Briefly, his point is that while everyone recognized the limitations of cross-sectional survey design, the Rand report goes on to point out that longitudinal designs do not overcome many of these weaknesses. The only guaranteed methodology is the use of the full-blown experiment; while Rand proposes such an experiment for a portion of this study, it understates the difficulty of carrying an experiment out. First, he argues that innovations in school practices which will succeed will have to be very broadly based, affecting the entire school, and that such wide-range innovations will be politically unacceptable. Secondly, even if they were politically acceptable the task of training teachers and principals would become enormous and unwieldy, and it would be almost impossible to maintain the integrity of the "treatments" over the prolonged period of time needed to assess the slowly accumulating effects of schooling. He concludes: "Consequently, I do not believe any possible design (experimental or non-experimental) is likely to yield fairly unambiguous results about the sort of complex innovations which most informed observers believe are necessary to make desegregation work well. Unless we can justify the utility of fairly ambiguous results, or can knowledgeably suggest some discrete innovations which can be expected to significantly affect the outcome of schooling, we probably should save the taxpayer's money."

Gary Orfield

Orfield's numerical rating of the proposal is most favorable of the Commission staff members (1.8, compared to Joe Feagin's 2.2, Jackson's 2.6, and 3 ratings below 3.3). His comments are generally very brief. He believes that more work should be done in conceptualizing the relevance of the research for Spanish speaking groups and believes the sampling scheme is too complex. He concludes by recommending (1) a more competent section on Chicano and Puerto Rican educational problems and their interactions with desegregation and the development of more appropriate instruments to study these students' outcomes, (2) a stronger concentration on elementary grades with particular attention to impacts of beginning schools in desegregated and integrated settings -- both in the large study and in the study of newly desegregated schools.